

My name is Everett Hamilton

I am here to speak on behalf of the Benton Rural Electric Association.

We as a utility are very concerned about the continual upward costs of doing studies to save endangered fish and snails. Throughout the state electrical consumers are currently subsidizing these studies by being forced to pay 22-24% higher costs on their electric bills to fund these studies. We are all for improving fish runs, but we would much rather support scientific and common sense methods of doing this.

We are very concerned about the continual studies done by the Corps of Engineers, we do not understand or agree with the same studies being done year after year at costs of hundreds of millions of dollars.

We are a utility with over 10,000 members and our goal as a utility is to provide reliable and affordable electricity. We have been involved in paying for these fish and most recently snail costs for years. There are many reasons for fish declines. Most of them seem to be in how the numbers are manipulated. As a provider of electricity we represent our members and we want results for the hundreds of millions of dollars the northwest is paying for fish and snail restoration.

We absolutely do not support removal of the dams for the following reasons:

Removing the dams will create miles of free flowing rivers which are full of sediment which will in our opinion cause more harm to the fish and snails than they currently face.

Barging of smolts seems to be the best way of increasing their numbers and this would be impossible if the dams were removed.

Our customers and the businesses they operate rely on the river system for cheap transportation and recreation as well as irrigation. Removing these dams will greatly decrease the survivability of many of these businesses.

The loss of the 4 dams on the lower Snake River according to the Corps of Engineers would reduce electrical output of the Bonnaville system by 12%. The Northwest is estimated to increase its population by 50 % in the next 20 years. Has anyone studied where the power will come from for this increased population.

We would like to say that the current Administration occupying the White House seems to be concentrating on destroying the economy of the Northwest. We adamantly oppose any studies or discussions of destroying our dams. We will continue our opposition to these insane proposals and costs.

I would like to add that Al Gore has stated that if elected President one of his first goals would be to remove Grand Coulee Dam, because it is

environmentally unfriendly. The Pacific Northwest would be very environmentally unfriendly to the people if we had no dams.

In closing we would like to say we support common sense ideas which will restore fish runs. Removing the dams on the lower Snake River will not restore fish runs. Removing these dams will do the following things.

- 1) Increase power costs in the Northwest**
- 2) Increase transportation costs in the Northwest.**
- 3) Destroy economies of crucial cities and businesses.**
- 4) Increase the probability that power outages will occur as our population increases.**

We as a utility stand firmly in the belief that our customers and other people of the Northwest would be greatly harmed if these dams are removed or compromised in any way.

Thank-you